Citizenship and Political Participation in the Mediterranean Region: EUMEF 20th New Faces Conference; Istanbul, February 27-March 2, 2014

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Sammelwerk / collection

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:
Fakoussa, D. (Ed.). (2014). *Citizenship and Political Participation in the Mediterranean Region: EUMEF 20th New Faces Conference; Istanbul, February 27-March 2, 2014* (DGAP-Bericht, 24). Berlin: Forschungsinstitut der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik e.V.; EU-Middle East Forum -EUMEF-. https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-56268-8

DGAPreport

No. 24 / November 2014

EUMEF 20th New Faces Conference Istanbul, February 27–March 2, 2014

Citizenship and Political Participation in the Mediterranean Region

Report by Berkay Mandiraci and Isinsu Bulus

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DGAP

About the EU-Middle East Forum

The EU-Middle East Forum (EUMEF) is a dialogue and networking program for young and mid-level professionals from North Africa as well as Turkey and Europe. The Forum was created in 2011, and it conceptualizes and organizes policy workshops like the New Faces Conferences and International Summer Schools. The forum tackles and analyzes different political, economic, and social issues and developments in the Arab region and Turkey, and it gives critical scrutiny to German and EU responses and policies. EUMEF is the follow-up project of the International Forum on Strategic Thinking (2006–2010) and the Forum European Foreign and Security Policy (1997–2005).

Acknowledgements

The EU-Middle East Forum would like to thank its partners for making the New Faces Conference such a great success. We are especially grateful to the following institutions for their support:

Robert Bosch Stiftung

FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG

ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius

We extend our sincere gratitude to Alexander Geiger, Deputy Representative of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in Istanbul, for his strong engagement and cooperation in realizing this conference. Last but not least, our special thanks go to our rapporteurs Berkay Mandiraci and Isinsu Bulus, whose dedication and efforts contributed substantially to the quality of this report.

Contents

20th New Faces Conference Istanbul, February 27–March 2, 2014 **Citizenship and Political Participation in the Mediterranean Region**

Report by Berkay Mandiraci and Isinsu Bulus
Dina Fakoussa (ed.)

Introduction[1]

Only a decade ago, the merits of democratization were at the forefront of academic and policy-making circles. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, the world was proclaimed to have reached "the end of history" and arrived at liberal democracy. Understood as "the only game in town," democracy and its promotion became an international norm, measured first and foremost by free and fair elections. It is undeniable that with the ousting of authoritarian rulers in countries like Libya, Tunisia, and Egypt, democratic discourse has opened more opportunities for citizen participation in formal politics than ever before. Interestingly, however, what manifests itself on the ground is a stark decrease in affiliation with political parties and weak election turnout, which constitute deficits in representational democracy. But rather than being indicative of people's disengagement from politics, this trend arguably hints at a hollowing out of formal channels of democracy. For what we witness today is an unprecedented mobilization of people in different corners of the world, an ever-growing trend of new modes of political participation and civic engagement within and beyond the national collective. A new cycle of collective action features in policy-making and scholarly agendas, organized through and visible in both public spaces such as streets and squares as well as the virtual spaces of the Internet and social media.

Sweeping across a wide range of political systems, regions, and economies, new modes of collective resistance with no clear leadership or ideology have left us with some crucial questions. On a more practical level, decision-makers are faced with questions of how and on whose terms to negotiate with the people on the streets, and how such negotiations might alter the existing balance of power. On a theoretical level, political analysts and scholars are using an analytics of resistance to tackle new tools and modes of political participation as well as changing meanings and practices of citizenship that expand beyond the conventional, duty-based, state-citizen relationship.

These and other questions were explored by the academics, activists, and researchers who gathered together for the conference "Citizenship and Political Participation in the Mediterranean Region." The conference aimed at understanding new forms of citizenship, along with the opportunities and barriers emitting from new trends in and repertoires of political participation. This report summarizes the conference's most-debated issues and presents its findings.[2]

Reconceptualizing and Enlarging the Concept of Citizenship

Politics of securitization and difference surged post 9/11, reasserting identity claims and cementing a rationale and rhetoric of exclusion. This development, coupled with the economic crisis of 2008, lent momentum to people's demands for recognition of cultural differences and for economic justice, without which democracy remains void. Culminating in moments of insurgence that swept across the Middle East and North Africa in 2010-11, the focus has shifted away from top-down democracy to bottom-up citizen participation in politics and society. In trying to understand the scope, effects, actors, and agenda of contemporary politics of resistance, the very concept of citizenship has come under scrutiny in both practical and scholarly endeavors.

The conference tackled the origin of the notion of citizenship and how it was challenged by new developments that transcended the nation-state. Citizenship as an organizing principle between the state and the individual arose from a particular European context; it is one of several Enlightenment concepts that gave rise to the modern nation-state. Taking its cue from Western individualism, the concept of citizenship has been utilized in turning "imagined communities" into highly centralized bureaucratic states buttressed by a particular sense of

nationhood. The nation-state concept of citizenship, the principle and usually unquestioned way in which citizenship is understood, assumes people's existence, sense of belonging, rights and duties are bound by and confined to a national entity. Yet contemporary practices of migrants, minorities or those marginalized by an official citizenship discourse reveal an unraveling of citizenship and its decoupling from the territoriality of the nation-state. The reasons highlighted at the conference were twofold; first, transnational institutions like the European Union offer new models and spaces of citizenship in which people on the periphery of national citizenship discourse can fulfill and claim their rights and freedoms as citizens. Second, citizenship is not a stagnant given awarded by the state; it is an active and multilayered concept that is constructed, negotiated, challenged, and performed through local, national, and international settings and quotidian practices, boosted by technological advancement, in particular social media.

Expert opinions differed on the definition of citizenship. Preferences ranged from highlighting the more concrete attributes and seeing it as a differentiated concept of equality, beyond legal rights, identity, and class to favoring multiculturalism or interculturalism. The varying concepts sparked a debate. Some were for example of the opinion that multicultural demands are voiced from an official state perspective, meaning multiculturalism as an idea categorically assumes binaries and self-generating collective identities, and therefore reifies identities. Opponents agreed that multiculturalism is a frozen view, but countered that interculturalism is the preferable term, as it refers to action and interaction and reflects the hybrid and changing nature of identities. There was agreement that since citizenship is a mindset, channels of cross-learning, interaction, and dialogue between citizens should be created for its cultivation.

Definitions aside, in calls for legal action and implementation, people on the margins of discourses of citizenship demand a concept of citizenship that is inclusive, non-gendered, and fosters equality. An understanding of citizenship as a multilayered construct is required to create a framework for such a citizenship. Citizenship practices do not necessarily correspond with national collectives, as identities are hybrid, multifaceted, and always in the making. Globalization, mobility across national borders, and advances in information technology all challenge conventional modes of citizenship. Beyond the rather stagnant and conventional understanding of citizenship as a framework of the nation-state, citizenship encompasses belonging to and interacting within a number of communities at the sub-state, inter-state, and supra-state level. One example presented was Turkish migrants in Germany, who actively perform and claim citizenship rights by participating in German public space without possessing German citizenship. In a similar vein, an empirical project entitled ENACT demonstrated that Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin, who in fact lack the status of European citizenship, are the most active in its practice. Not only do they mobilize to pressure local authorities and the government of Turkey through institutional bodies like the European Court of Human Rights, they also effectively use European public space to stake their claims. Similar to the Kurds, women, Armenians, and youth, among others, also make use of the European space, which inevitably has changed the official Turkish narrative of citizenship.

There was agreement that by exploring citizenship as a multilayered and enacted phenomenon, a move beyond binaries can materialize, capturing discussions about citizenship that are not always reflected in investigations thereof as a legal status. However, participants also agreed that the counterproductive regression of citizenship rights currently visible in Europe, where exclusionary and nationalist discourses are gaining ground and finding followers, is a major challenge to such an understanding. Still, the necessity of this new conceptualization was stressed, and it was asserted that moving beyond a duty-based towards a rights-based understanding of citizenship requires the protection and extension of citizens' rights and freedoms. To this end, two – often mutually dependent – tracks must be followed: redistribution of wealth and recognition of difference.

Redistribution of Wealth

Discussions and interventions tackled the long term struggle for social and economic justice, which has now taken new forms – especially since the 2008 economic crisis. Demands for a fairer, economically more just society has been at the epicenter of movements from Puerta del Sol to the streets of Tunis. The Spanish case was dealt with in detail. After severe austerity measures were taken in Spain, which suffers from exorbitant unemployment rates, highly skilled but unemployed youth have found themselves to be the new 'precarious class.' Ongoing corruption scandals, cuts in public spending and high levels of income inequality – higher in Spain than in any other EU member state according to the OECD –have led to political distrust in various countries around the world and given birth to movements like 15M in Spain. Economic

discontent and the housing problem turned into a massive social movement, bolstered by an erosion of trust in politicians and democratic institutions. Alongside demands for the democratic regeneration of Spain's political system, the indignados also called for the redistribution of wealth, job security, the greater regulation and supervision of financial markets, public healthcare, education, and implementation of the constitutional right to adequate housing. Collective discontent and frustration across Spain has manifested itself not only in public occupations and social media activism, but also in a growing support for separatist claims. Since the start of the economic crisis, support for Catalan independence more than doubled, rising above 50 percent for the first time. In contrast the number of Basques supporting independence remained at around 30 percent, which was attributed to the degree of fiscal autonomy that is already in place. A disproportionate share of costs fuels support for Catalan independence. Evocative of the famous dictum "no taxation without representation," Catalan nationalist rhetoric is against redistribution and for more fiscal autonomy, arguing that a large share of taxes paid by Catalans should stay in Catalonia. The conference also explored the Kurdish case, which was found indicative of the correlation between economic progress and a decrease in separatist tendencies. Kurds residing in Turkey are not willing to give up the economic gains that Turkey's neoliberal economic policies and trade agreements with Northern Iraq have transferred to their region. Therefore, for most Kurds, the most feasible option seems to be remaining part of Turkey, as Turkey is modernizing, is oriented towards Europe, and has good economic prospects.

Recognition of Difference

Deepening material inequalities and growing socio-cultural differences in democracies have helped give voice to demands for recognition by those who exist within society, but are invisible to the political system. It was found that in renegotiating the social contract between governments and individuals, questions about the very make up of society repeatedly crop up. Who constitutes the demos of democracy and who is left out is translated directly into processes of political participation. The relationship between democratic deliberation and national discourses of citizenship proves particularly relevant to democracies in transition. In other words, identity claims act both as a constituent force of as well as an indication of citizenship. The debate showed that women, youth, and ethnic and religious minority groups, among others, are not content to be seen as the objects of welfare policies, but demand a voice and stake their claim as subjects in agenda-setting and policy-making processes. The right to have and to demand rights acts today as a primary tenet of the practice of citizenship, which illustrates how the notion of citizenship has shifted from a duty-based to a rights-based understanding.

Demographics

While the concept of youth is very difficult to pin down as it covers a diverse group of people, it was defined from a sociological outlook, that is, as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, between unemployment and employment. As it encompasses a delicate and vulnerable life stage, it is a time when greater guidance and support is needed. For that reason, lack of employment opportunities, failures of educational systems, and blocked channels for civic engagement cause deep levels of frustration and despair among youth, which they then may channel into political activism, grassroots movements, or even separatism. It is no coincidence that, for example, the Catalan secession movement gained popularity among youth at a time when youth unemployment in Spain is at a staggering 56 percent. Those who feel let down the most by the political status quo are more likely to fight against it. With little to lose, youth tend to be more active and daring in the expression of their dissent. The uprisings in the Arab world were taken as a very powerful example of this fact.

Conference participants noted that young people, who are in the formative years of building their identities and are not well accommodated by prevailing narratives of citizenship, develop a sense of belonging through the movements they take part in, which in turn mobilizes them. In the example of a Kurd jailed in Turkey, a participant elaborated that even being labeled as a terrorist can offer a space of identification. However, understanding the group as a source of identity comes with the risk of overperforming membership in trying to maintain identification with and loyalty to the group. This comes at the expense of losing sight of the principles with which the group first set out. As groups tend to favor centralization and unity, group rights and demands often subsume the opinions of individual members.

Gender

Part of the debate and some of the interventions scrutinized women's rights and issues and how they have long

been a battlefield in the Arab region. Women have been, and still are, instrumentalized in the political arena by a patriarchal mentality. One point raised was that women's rights have continuously been utilized for the consolidation of a male-dominated state apparatus under the pretext of modernization, Islamism, or other meta-narratives. Hence investigations of the legal and symbolic status leant women were considered deficient, as they portray only a limited picture of women's issues. Despite their effectiveness and visibility, both historically and in recent uprisings, women – as protesters, human rights activists, bloggers, opposition politicians, etc. – still lack representation in the formal contemporary political scene. A sentiment shared by conference participants was that women's agency is acknowledged only at times of extraordinary measures. The rule is rather that women in the Arab world are relegated to domestic and private spheres in which they are easy to control and regulate.

The example of Tunisia was central to this debate. With the adoption of a modernizing and secular Code of Personal Status in 1956, Tunisia was seen as exemplary for women's rights in the region. Starting with independence, Bourguiba's reign marked an era of state-sponsored feminism. Emancipation of women materialized through a top-down approach initiated by the political elite. From 1987 to 2011, the governments that followed Bourguiba also utilized women's issues as a means to their political ends. Their expressed objective was no more and no less than underscoring the prevailing modern face of Tunisia. After the ousting of Ben Ali, Tunisia tried to translate political activism on the ground into formal politics by adopting a gender parity law for the upcoming elections, which required candidate lists to be evenly split between men and women, itemized so that genders alternated. Comprising 50 percent of the candidates, women headed only eight percent of the lists. Since the legal framework set out by the High Commission was loosely formulated, parity was applied horizontally and not vertically in election lists. Only one party, PDM, also interpreted parity vertically, so that women headed their lists. The structure of voting therefore amplified the systematic male preference. Although all female candidates were affected, secular women were affected most. Women from the Ennahdha party held almost all of the seats won by female candidates. This disparity was owing to the fact that Ennahda was the most successful party in the elections.

Conference participants discussed Ennahda's stand as regards the compatibility of Islam, citizenship, and democracy. While the party defines itself as inspired by Islam and tries to protect women's rights, it also promotes conservative family values and gender roles, which contradicts the party's rhetoric. However, this was interpreted as a political strategy through which the party tries to gain societal consensus, unlike the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It was elaborated that Ennahdha showed little enthusiasm for consensus building at the level of legislation, yet a strong willingness to reach consensus at the level of governance, as it agreed to govern with secularists. This was believed by all to be an interesting example for other countries in the region in terms of how Islamic values can be reconciled within a reformist understanding of sharia through a democratic and pluralistic understanding of citizenship. If successful, the argument went, this would give positive signals for other countries trying to bridge Islamic values and liberal democracy.

The polarizing climate in Tunisian society today was found to be projected on the female body, and the antagonistic juxtaposition of Islamists and secularists in Tunisia serves merely to deepen divisions between women. Gendered manifestations of both camps are nurtured by, and continue to perpetuate divergent visions for the Tunisian polity in which women are always marginalized. There was consensus that gender questions will continue to be a contentious issue in the political spectrum, and that women's rights will still be instrumentalized for political gains. According to many, this is why discussions over the role of women and their claims for equal citizenship must reach beyond a mere investigation of their legal status and focus more on the ways in which legality is translated into practice.

Language

Linguistic policies of nation-states relate not merely to issues of political management, but form a constitutive part of a larger ideological national discourse. Since language is both a reflection and an instrument of political power, its (in)visibility and status in public spaces hints at the ways in which the concept of citizenship is delineated by political authorities.

Language forms an integral part of separatist identity formation and is a powerful rallying point in many cases. Centered on the preservation and distinctness of their language, both Kurds in Turkey and Catalans in Spain – historically denied the use of their mother tongue – differentiate themselves based on their language. It was highlighted that although there has been a shift from the demand for Kurdish independence to a rather vaguely formulated demand for democratic autonomy, the movement still calls for an enlargement of civil and political rights,

above all rights involving the use of the Kurdish language in education, media, and political life. In comparison, Catalans have won the right to education in their mother tongue, but the Catalan language still serves as a key reference point in defining Catalan identity.

A close look was also taken at Morocco's linguistic characteristics and politics. Its tangled linguistic landscape is a fitting case to illustrate how linguistic policies mirror and mold political debates on national identity and recognition of ethnic differences. In 2011, in response to protests sweeping Morocco, a new constitution was introduced by King Mohamed VI which made Tamazight an official language of the state alongside Arabic and hence recognized the cultural diversity of Moroccan society. Following the establishment of the Royal Institute of Tamazight Culture in 2001, constitutional acknowledgement of Tamazight was considered a promising act for the achievement of equal citizenship. However, it was lamented that the government has yet to pass the legislation required to implement the initiative, which would integrate Tamazight into teaching and other areas of public life. Along with the status of Tamazight, another linguistic debate taking place in Morocco was depicted as a telling case study; the question of whether Darija, Moroccan Arabic, should replace classical Arabic as the language of school education. In general, these debates about language reflect the transformations in Morocco's national identity and in the country's discourse on citizenship.

Ethnicity

If citizenship protects and promotes a national identity, then all groups constituting "the nation" need to be at ease with its conceptualization. Similar to debates around linguistic habitus, ethnic references in discourses of national citizenship demarcate the boundaries of citizenship. When drafting a new constitution, articles on the make-up of society tend to spark huge controversy, as was the case in Tunisia, Morocco, and Turkey. In drafting the new constitution in Turkey for example, Article 66 of the constitution – "Everyone bound to the Turkish state through the bond of citizenship is a Turk" – sparked huge controversy and was attacked in particular by the Kurdish political movement, along with liberals who fought against a constitutional basis for assimilation and demanded an "ethnicity-free" definition of citizenship. The Kurdish issue in general was part of an intense debate on questions of ethnicity. The peace process between the PKK and the Turkish state led to a ceasefire and enabled first steps towards deliberative democratic engagement in Turkey. A group that called itself "wise men" was formed to reach out to people and engage them in political discussion and negotiation, which not only contributed towards voicing the demands of Kurds, but of all constituent yet marginalized groups of society such as women, Alawites, youth, etc. Although the way in which the peace process was initiated and the non-democratic formation of the "wise men" were heavily criticized, there was agreement that both have opened up the floor for an all-embracing discourse on citizenship.

Religion

Along with claims of linguistic rights and demands for the enlargement of the ethnic boundaries of citizenship, religion constitutes another important area of negotiation in the remaking of the social contract between the state and individuals, and the conference also revolved around this contentious element of the social fabric.

There are different political arrangements between state apparatus and the religions to which their citizens adhere. Coming from distinct historical trajectories, France, Canada, Great Britain, and the United States illustrate alternative ways of regulating the role of religion in politics. Arguably, Great Britain has the most moderate attitude towards religion; it has adopted a laissez-faire understanding and has managed to achieve greater social cohesion by delegating power and empowering local communities. In contrast to the moderate secularism of Britain, France follows a path of anti-multiculturalist rhetoric, and refuses to accommodate group-specific religious provisions; instead, an individualistic citizenship framework prevails.

Interventions and discussions focused on the emphasis on recognition of group particularities as regards the claims put forward by religious minorities. Interestingly, however, as grounded as these claims are in cultural narratives, they also pragmatically connect to a broader framework of universal principles like freedom, equality, and human rights. As a product of liberal egalitarianism, multicultural citizenship in practice ensures the rights of individuals, while at the same time granting group-based exceptions.

Related to liberal, communitarian debates in political philosophy, the trade-off between individual and groups rights also raises questions on how to reconcile religion, a communitarian value system, with an individualized narrative of liberal citizenship. The law on awqaf (Islamic endowment) in Tunisia made a fitting example to illust-

rate the priority of community in Islam in contrast to the strong position of the individual in liberal thinking. As a social religion, Islam follows a utilitarian as opposed to an individualist logic, in that goods and services that are beneficial to the community are prioritized over the rights of individuals. In this vein, proponents of reestablishing the awqaf system in Tunisia argue that it would provide Tunisian society with collective goods and services. However, some argued that instituting the awqaf system would create a state within a state, whereby public property would be under the control of private entities instead of the state. The debate on the reinstitution of awqaf thereby underlines another crucial debate in political theory on the size and scope of the state. The state, as a political apparatus, is understood to function primarily in order to provide its citizens with public goods and services, and it plays a central role in cultivating a civic culture in which citizens' welfare is maintained while their agency is recognized. Civil society organizations can act only as complements and not alternatives to the state. This is why some argue that against the background of a weak state, private endowments would take up a central role in the public sphere, and would promote their own weltanschauung, binding people through the educational and cultural services they provide. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Gulen movement of Turkey are two good examples of winning people over through financial resources.

The opposite, one statement indicated, is also possible. A strong state can override civil society and democratic checks and balances. The political authority then appropriates civil society at will. The Turkish state served as an example. Its centralized and strong bureaucracy started off as a military project and was not built to serve its citizens. Since then, it has never learnt to protect and provide for the welfare of its people. As this is more of a structural problem, Turkey was believed today to be undergoing a power shift in state authoritarianism from Kemalists to Islamo-Kemalists. The conundrum of a state caught between serving its citizens and fighting for its survival is central to debates on enlarging citizenship rights and freedoms. As increasing distrust in institutional politics and growing demands for equal citizenship have demonstrated, authoritarian practices are doomed to fail, even if they bring about economic success for a small number of people. Moreover, people raise their voices not merely for economic reasons but equally, if not more so, to protest majoritarian policies pursued by the ruling elite.

An important point raised here was the gap between legality and practice. Rather than serving as a unifying act, drafting a new constitution provided wiggle room for the political elite who aimed to retain the existing balance of power by adopting new laws and utilizing new codes. Although legal improvements need to be understood as fundamental steps towards practicing full citizenship, there was agreement that one has to be cautious about the ways in which recognition and enlargement of citizenship rights and liberties become an instrument of political authorities and do not automatically translate into practice. Therefore, with regard to the accommodation of different cultural and ethnic groups, making Tamazight an official language, women's rights, and religious freedoms, legal texts have to be put into practice, for only upon implementation can equal citizenship for all be attained.

Going beyond the Nation-State

The conference discussed the effect of new transnational actors and their institutional offshoots that both cultivate and undermine the concept of citizenship. Practices of European citizenship by non-citizens/non-residents, e.g. the Kurds residing in Turkey, enabled by the extended economic, legal, political, and normative orders developed around the EU, enlarge and enact the concept of citizenship both of nation-states and of the European Union. Democratic consolidation, and more specifically the process of accession to the European Union, has brought decisive change to Turkey's discourse on citizenship. There was agreement that over the past fifteen years, Europeanization has been the most influential parameter in making Turkey's citizenship framework more inclusive. Boosted by globalization, new institutional models offer new models of belonging as well. For instance, based on the European model of economic integration and cultural diversity, Catalans hope to remain within the EU after a possible secession.

At the same time, the debate highlighted the fact that external actors also undermine citizen participation in representational democracies, as growing interdependence brings about restrictions on citizens' say about their countries' affairs. When institutions like the IMF, for example, make decisions on crucial political matters, public trust and legitimacy is undermined, as happened in Greece. This is one of the important factors causing the hollowing out of democracy and is the reason why people start shying away from conventional methods of participation and develop new methods and repertories in order to stake their claims and get their demands across.

Enacting Citizenship

Political participation and participation in democratic processes in general are changing and liquid phenomena. In the current political setting, it is crucial to distinguish between formal and informal channels and means of participation. Formal channels could be defined as partaking in local or national elections, whereas informal channels refer to a number of means and tools that have been developed by citizens in order to express their needs and demands. These not only crystallize in social movements and social media, but are also reflected by citizens' involvement in civil society formations and platforms or simply public forums.

Interplay of Formal and Informal Channels of Participation

It was stressed that the boundaries of what is traditionally conceptualized as "political" or "political actors" need to be expanded in order to incorporate social actors who are alienated from the political system. Alienation might be due to exclusionary state measures, a feeling of being unrepresented and hence unwillingness to participate through formal channels, and/or a feeling of mistrust towards established state mechanisms. A new conceptualization of "the political" might then encompass everyday forms of political action including the social ties formed through kinship or vicinity. This new conceptualization was found to be especially crucial as regards the position of marginalized or subaltern groups who live under precarious conditions, have encountered state violence and oppression, and have no access to channels that allow them to voice their demands. This in turn can and often does lead to the creation of silenced masses, who are not in a position to effectively express their needs and demands. At the same time, alternative or new ways of participation might be the result. Any space where social interaction occurs – be it a market square, a mosque or a wedding – can become a form of participation. The point made was that, especially in more authoritarian settings, these spaces of interaction turn into important tools for individuals to engage in the process of public opinion forming.

People across the globe, including Europe, Turkey, and the Arab world, have turned towards alternative channels to articulate their existence and have come up with new forms and repertoires of political engagement. Social media, hip-hop, rap, art, street dancing, comedy, humor, and graffiti have thus become important tools of political advocacy. These everyday forms of resistance act as the weapons of the weak. They intervene in time and space within the official narrative imposed by the state, and these 'softer' forms of engagement were found to function as leverage for change, demonstrating that active citizens are in need of a democratic system which goes beyond the sole recognition of conventional tools of participation. These new forms of participation also result in a politics of space within which different means of expression are used and public squares can create a constituent counter-power. The same holds true for the digital space created by social media, a new space for citizenship interaction. However, one crucial question posed was: how responsive are power-holders to this newly transformed political space? What are their attitudes about and reactions to the newly emerging means of participation and mediums of interaction? Power-holders across many regions try to retain their positions without any feedback or questioning from society. This non-communication and the lack of accountability and of responsiveness mechanisms leads to frustration and dissent, and, eventually, unrest and protests. Hence it was underlined that demands of citizens need to be accommodated and that power-holders need to be responsive to citizens on the street. The opposite reaction (repression) can also have a polarizing influence on society, in that supporters of the power-holders are brought together by their portrayal as patriotic, loyal citizens. Turkey and Egypt were given as alarming examples in this context.

Another significant aspect which enables citizens to better and more effectively participate in political processes is voicing demands to local administrations. In general, it is very difficult for citizens to participate actively in highly centralized state structures. Local governments – if empowered and if managed effectively and efficiently – can have a better understanding of the needs and desires of their citizens and are thus better able to respond. Empowering local administrations and increasing political dialogue between these structures and citizens was held up as one of the key ways in which political participation might be enhanced. Morocco was taken as an example of a country that is empowering local structures. Larger space was given to women and youth in a referendum held on July 1, 2011. According to the new constitution, youth shall participate in democratic processes through youth consultative councils. This provision was put into force due to the problem of youth apathy, which emanated from distrust in a political system that was unresponsive to their claims and demands. Youth councils were created at the local and municipal level to provide incentives for young individuals to engage more actively in the

political process. Youth participation in political parties has also been furthered through a quota system, taking into account the ever-increasing interest among youth to become active within civil society. The February 20 Movement, which was the driving force behind the uprising in Morocco, functioned as an important social mechanism and a way of expressing young people's demands for participation in formal politics. The Moroccan experience demonstrated how established, formal state structures can respond to emerging political demands through legal changes and the institutionalization of mechanisms of participation. There were doubts, however, as to whether this new mechanism will be sustainable and effective and whether there is a genuine will by the political elite to integrate recommendations made by youth into policy.

A controversial topic dealt with in this context pertained to the extent to which freedom of expression and participation should be granted. Should formal mechanisms be open to any kind of political view? The case of increasing radical right-wing tendencies in Europe – especially the case of Golden Dawn in Greece, which gained popularity after the name dispute with Macedonia – were at the heart of the controversy. The name issue, coupled with the exigencies created by harsh austerity measures and the euro crisis, allowed the movement to gain popularity and establish itself in Greek politics. Since then, it has become more radical and has engaged in organized incidents of verbal and physical attacks against migrants. Although it endorses a racist and violent agenda, Golden Dawn is nevertheless a legitimate political party that was able to establish itself within formal politics. This raises the question of the limits of participation in formal politics. Where should the line be drawn? And would more restrictions only direct these radical sentiments underground, making them even more dangerous?

The question of limits to the freedom of expression also emerged when dealing with the Internet as a new channel of participation. In an age in which access to and the spread of information are accelerated, the Internet has become a crucial political space in which individuals can interact freely and share their opinions. Online social movements, together with an insurgent form of online citizenship, have become more and more influential. Social media not only plays a crucial role merely in mobilizing people and keeping them in contact with one another, but it also provides citizens with a chance to remain engaged and active in the political sphere. For example, different Internet platforms are currently used to hold states accountable for their actions. A striking example presented at the conference was that of Mursimeter, a bilingual (English/Arabic) website that monitored the performance of the first democratically elected president in Egypt, Mohamed Morsi, by tracking his achievements as regards the 64 promises he made. The French website copwatch.org was presented as another example. It monitors the actions of French police officers by publishing photos or videos of excessive police violence. Wikileaks has also been a breakthrough in the publishing of secret state documents. The consensus was that all of these new digital developments have the potential of ultimately transforming methods of political participation, but also the ways in which states attempt to control the new online public sphere. One participant made the point that we already are witnessing so-called established democracies rewriting laws in order to limit freedom of expression, especially on the Internet. Their justification is the protection of individual privacy and state security, which has opened up an ongoing and ardent debate on the limits and implications of freedom of opinion.

Participation in Social Movements

Conference participants pinpointed varying motivating factors behind social movements. A mismanaged economy, corrupt structures, youth unemployment, marginalization by official discourses and policies, and inequalities are some of the often mutually dependent incentives. Thus seen, actors of social movements transcend national boundaries and signal solidarity with groups across the globe that suffer from the same grievances and inequalities. The distinction between social movement, protest, and social moment was deemed fundamental when creating an analytical framework for discussion. The word "movement," according to one argument, implies a highly structured group of people with a concrete agenda. In this sense, the idea of a "movement" is very much linked to the logic of the state. This distinction was believed to be key to differentiating between the informal and formal actors of any type of social upheaval. Whether the Gezi protests, for example, can be defined as a movement or shall ever become one was doubted by experts and participants. But classifications aside, the Gezi Park protests in Turkey were stated as a crucial moment of a new deliberative urban citizenship, in which urban citizens take a clear stance when delivering their messages and opinions about how public space should be controlled and structured. It marked an instance of reclaiming urban space that belongs to, or should belong to, the people. It was a revolt against established political parties and a flawed representational democracy, against a political system

that is highly centralized, and a government which has turned more authoritarian. It was seen by participants as a leaderless uprising with ongoing political momentum and as yet unknown political consequences. Phenomena such as the Gezi protests can usually not be sustained for a long period of time, since they are quickly appropriated by the system. But there is no linear line of progression and no end to the ramifications and repercussions of the moment. It will resonate over time and come to the fore at crucial social moments, so one expert opinion.

Many common characteristics were found when analyzing social movements across the globe. In, for example, "occupy" movements around the world, citizens came together to demonstrate opposition to their leadership. Resistance became a hegemonic force, even if only at certain moments in time. Mistrust towards established political participatory mechanisms and a sense of non-representation were also common features of other mass social protests from Bangkok to Bosnia and from Ukraine to Egypt. Another common characteristic was that there is always an igniting moment, but dynamics were developing long before that one moment. In Egypt, mobilization started long before the Tahrir protests. In Istanbul, there were already mass protests on May 1, and smaller protests earlier. Therefore, these social upheavals can also be seen as an accumulation and eruption of public dissent.

Conclusion

Recent political and social developments across the globe have marked a significant change in traditional ways of making and participating in politics. The reconstitution of what is called the political together with new conceptualizations of citizenship and new forms of political and democratic participation opened up debates on a changed understanding of "public space." Citizens' interactions have diversified, encompassing new means of interaction, and citizenship has come to be defined on more individualistic terms. Putting rights and freedoms at the core of citizenship has opened new windows for participation and challenged established participatory mechanisms. The redefinition of the political and of public space has thus prepared the ground for new forms of political participation within which any kind of self-expression can be regarded as a participatory act. Thus the political sphere has evolved into a framework for individual action in which participation is taking place not only through formal means, but through channels ranging from the arts and culture to social media activism. This new conceptualization of the political does not confine the political to parliament, governmental procedures, and constitutional arrangements, but rather refers to a reactivation of political thinking encompassing elements of direct democracy and civic engagement.

In all of the cases showcased during the conference, citizenship was literally "enacted," with the aim of enlarging rights and freedoms and the legal framework within which they are defined. From a legal notion, citizenship has turned into an enacted, active concept through which citizens act for their democratic rights. Crucial to these changing notions and practices is an understanding of how to build on collective energy and on the new channels of political expression, as well as how to make power-holders more accountable and more attentive to these new forms of participation. Only time will tell whether established systems will manage to absorb new forms and modes of politics by subsuming all alternatives, or whether the clash between the "established" and the "new" will give way to further fragmentation and a deepening of societal cleavages.

Other fundamental questions remain that still need deeper analysis and attention: How can the gap between formal and informal participation be bridged? Where can one draw the line between formal and informal participation? How can different forms of participation be linked to a shifting understanding of citizenship? How do new channels or tools of participation challenge or strengthen established state structures and mechanisms? How can the formal system regain the trust of people and be more reflective of society? These are important questions that need to be tackled thoroughly in order to better conceptualize the influence of a newly emerging "politics of public squares" on traditional, formal politics. At the end of the day, politics and democracy are processes that are continually renegotiated and redefined; they are processes in the making even in so-called established democracies.

Notes

1 The conference was held under the Chatham House Rule.

2 It must be noted that questions pertaining to the conceptualization and practice of citizenship are inherent to discussions of political participation. In accordance with the conference structure, the report's distinction between citizenship and participation is solely for analytical purposes; in practice these concepts are closely intertwined and there is no clear-cut distinction.

DGAP**report** / No. 24 / November 2014

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Herausgeberin dieser Ausgabe
Dina Fakoussa
ISSN 1866-9182

Editing Miranda Robbins
Layout Andreas Alvarez
Design Concept Carolyn Steinbeck